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WASHINGTON -- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi announced recipients of his annual award to recognize excellence in nursing and support of nursing by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center administrators. The awardees were honored for their contributions to veterans health care in a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

"Nurses are at the core of the high-quality care that veterans deserve and receive throughout VA's patient-centered system," said Secretary Principi. "VA nurses can be counted on to offer the best care possible to those who need it the most. These award winners are the best of the best."

This year's award recipients are: James Horstmyer, Registered Nurse award, Wilmington, Del., VA Medical Center; Patricia Johnson, Licensed Practical Nurse award, Buffalo, N.Y., VA Medical Center; Christopher Hermann, Advanced Practice Nurse award, Detroit VA Medical Center; Shirley Cline, Nursing Assistant award, Bronx, N.Y., VA Medical Center; Frankie Manning, R.N., Nurse Executive award, Seattle VA Medical Center; and Linda Watson, R.N., director of the Tuskegee, Ala., VA Medical Center, Director's award.

VA has one of the largest nursing staffs of any health care system in the world. Numbering nearly 55,000 nationwide, the VA nursing team -- composed of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, vocational nurses and nursing assistants -- provides comprehensive and compassionate care to the nation's veterans, helping them to maintain or regain health, to learn to live with disabilities and to die with dignity.

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Secretary's Awards for Excellence in Nursing 2003

Christopher Hermann, APRN, Detroit, Mich.

Christopher Hermann is an advanced practice registered nurse at the John D. Dingall VA Medical Center. Hermann is considered an expert in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma and sleep dysfunction. He has been a significant contributor in the area of respiratory therapy and was the first nurse practitioner in the medical center to obtain in-house privileges. Hermann is a member of the nursing research committee and has recently submitted a research project for approval from Wayne State University Human Investigation. He is also a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, American Nurses Association, Michigan Nurses Association, American Heart Association, and the Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners (for which he is president-elect).

James Horstmyer, R.N., Wilmington, Del.

Horstmyer recently completed the master's degree program for nurse practitioner, and is a member of his local chapter of Sigma Theta Tau. He has expanded his role of pre-op testing for vascular surgery to include patients referred from Lebanon, Pa. In this role he collaborates with physicians, anesthesia, nurses and support services to prepare a patient for surgery. He designed a standardized practice for surgical patients who were using blood thinners such as coumadin and plavix. He also researched herbal medications and their possibly adverse affect on clotting, blood pressure and anesthesia.

Patricia Johnson, L.P.N., Buffalo, N.Y.

Johnson has been a licensed practical nurse in the home care setting for 12 years. She is zealous in her concerns for patients, reporting her observations and ensuring action is taken to address the concerns. She is self-directed in identifying her learning needs, and attends training sessions that are pertinent to her position. Johnson's calm nature and excellent listening skills are widely recognized.

Shirley Cline, PCA, Bronx, N.Y.

Cline assesses practice and offers suggestions for improvement. One initiative is the Nursing Assistant's End of Shift Report that improved productivity and morale among the NAs. In collaboration, she created a template to facilitate focused documentation of care for NAs. Her observational skills are outstanding. She has gained the respect of her peers, such that one noted "I want to be like Ms. Cline in a few years."

Frankie Manning, RN, Nurse Executive, Seattle, Wash.

Manning has consistently fostered the growth and development of nursing staff and clinical programs, provided the vision and driving force in developing new programs, and actively participates in the leadership of the medical center. Some of the nursing initiatives she has created are: the Same Day Unit, Outreach Health Screening Program, Continuous Care Clinic, a restraint-free environment, and a Woman Veteran's Coordinator. She created the Adopt-A-Student program in collaboration with local community colleges. She has created several outreach programs with the schools of nursing, as well as international colleagues.

Linda F. Watson, R.N., Director, Central Alabama (Tuskegee, Ala.)

Watson's leadership and support have fostered an environment in which advance practice nurses are vital partners in the provision of high quality patient care in virtually every section of the large health care system. She was the driving force behind a strong program of nursing care management for high-risk populations. Under Watson's leadership, a nurse-managed patient safety program has transformed the health care system into a benchmark facility. She remains in constant contact with the needs of nurses and other clinicians through a highly visible management style and dialogue with staff and patients. The most recent Nursing Home Satisfaction Survey revealed that the percentage of patients who trusted their nursing staff was in the high 90s -- a

recognition that is possible because of Watson's ongoing support.

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